



2008 Highlights

VHA National Center for Health Promotion
and Disease Prevention (NCP)

www.prevention.va.gov

Message from the Chief Consultant

LINDA KINSINGER, MD, MPH, Chief Consultant for Preventive Medicine

THIS IS THE THIRD YEAR the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, a field-based national program office within the Office of Patient Care Services, has produced an annual report. For FY 2008, we're calling it our "Highlights Report." That's because we couldn't put in all the activities and projects that we worked on this year, so we're featuring just the "highlights." There's a lot to mention!

The biggest change in our office this year was all the new staff we added—a total of 10 people over the year. Three of these staff replaced former NCP'ers who'd left for other positions or retired; the other seven were new positions created to support the expanding work of the Center. We bid farewell to Pam Del Monte, Program Manager for Prevention Practice; Brenda Tuttle, Program Support Assistant; and Rosemary Strickland, Special Assistant, who retired after 21 years in VA. We welcomed these new staff: Kathy Pittman, Program Manager for Prevention Practice; Terri Murphy, Prevention Policy Coordinator; Sue Diamond, Program Manager for Community Health; Trang Lance, Research and Evaluation Analyst; Barbara Snyder, Health Education Coordinator; Lynn Novorska, Dietitian Program Coordinator; Sophia Hurley, Physical Activity Program Coordinator; Nancy Granecki, Special Assistant; Bobby Lucas, Program Support Assistant; and Angela Gathright, Program Support Assistant. It's been exciting having new faces, new ideas, and new energy at NCP!

Our staff is now large enough for most sections to function in teams (we do have two Program Managers who are each a "team of one"). As you'll see, each clinical section is represented in the report. The administrative team provides important support to all the clinical teams—none of us could function without them. So even though they don't get in the spotlight as much, we recognize that they're critical members of the overall NCP team.

We made substantial progress in many areas this year, as described in this report. And we have plans and proposals for further work in these and other, new areas for next year. We always aim to deliver excellent support of health promotion and disease prevention services in VHA. Our goal is *"keeping Veterans well and well-informed."*

Linda Kinsinger



Prevention Practice & Policy

LEILA C. KAHWATI, MD, MPH, Deputy Chief Consultant for Preventive Medicine

FY08 was a year of transition for the Prevention Practice and Policy section of the NCP. Changes included:

- A new Program Manager for Prevention Practice, Kathy Pittman, RN, MPH.
- A newly created position of Prevention Policy Coordinator, Terri Murphy, RN, MSN.
- Organization into a team.

Guidance to the field on clinical preventive services in the VHA has been provided through a variety of organizational approaches, such as performance measures; VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guidelines; VHA Information Letters, Handbooks, and Directives; and briefs prepared by the VACO Program Office. Local facilities and/or VISNs also implement their own policies (often in the form of locally installed electronic clinical reminders), which may vary from facility to facility. In FY08 we:

- Chartered a Preventive Medicine Field Advisory Committee, charged with advising NCP on matters related to clinical prevention practice and policy. The Advisory Committee held its first face-to-face meeting in June and has met monthly by phone since.
- Submitted a draft VHA Handbook that will allow VHA to establish a systematic process across VHA for developing clinical preventive services guidance around which other organizational strategies can be aligned (such as clinical reminders and performance measures). Guidance for each existing and new service will be developed on the basis of US Preventive Services Task Force and Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommendations and modified as needed to fit the VHA population and system.

We continued our ongoing commitment to providing VHA staff and patients with good preventive health information. In FY08 we:

- Developed and completed pilot testing of newly developed, complementary patient and provider brochures on cardiovascular-related clinical preventive services.
- Continued our ongoing effort to provide “one-stop” preventive health information through our www.prevention.va.gov Internet website. The site averages 177 hits daily (an increase from last year), with an average of 443 page views per day.



- Continued monthly national conference calls which keep clinicians in the field updated with the latest clinical developments and VHA policy.

For FY09, we will be taking a fresh look at how we work with field clinicians to improve and enhance prevention practice. We want to develop a better understanding of field needs, so that we can offer technical assistance and solutions that work. Our new staff with fresh perspectives are a great asset to an existing program to help us accomplish this.

HealthierUS Veterans

SUE DIAMOND, RN, MSN, Program Manager, Community Health

HealthierUS Veterans (HUSV), an obesity and diabetes prevention initiative, is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). NCP is the lead office in VA for HUSV. The five core components of the HUSV initiative are:

- VA's MOVE! Weight Management Program
- Prescription for Health
- Fitness Challenges
- Partnership
- Fit for Life Volunteer Corps

Partnership, creativity, and perseverance are the keys to promoting the HUSV Initiative and educating Veterans, their families, and communities about the health benefits of healthy eating and physical activity. In fiscal year 2008, through this initiative, NCP:

- **Expanded its staff in May 2008 to include a new Program Manager for Community Health, Sue Diamond, RN, MSN, who will lead HUSV activities.**
- **Partnered with Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) in November 2007 to launch the Champions' Challenge, a physical activity challenge to walk or roll 100 miles in 100 days. Over 35,000 participants enrolled in the challenge, and 8% completed it! Milestone prizes were awarded and participants who completed the challenge were entered into a national drawing. A total of 240 national prizes, worth over \$12,000, were awarded. During the challenge, VCS partnered with General Mills to recognize the gold medal winners of the 2007 National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Their pictures were featured on a special edition box of Cheerios that was sold in military markets and VCS retail stores around the country. The enthusiasm for the challenge was terrific and it was a great way to promote physical activity among Veterans, their families, and VA employees.**



Veteran MICHAEL MEDIK from Batavia, NY who won a pair of athletic shoes in the Champions' Challenge national drawing.


 VAMC San Juan


 VAMC Mt. Home


 VAMC Cleveland


 VAMC Augusta


 VAMC Houston

Take the "Champions' Challenge":

MOVE!

Walk or Roll 100 Miles in 100 Days


 VAMC Augusta




 VAMC Long Beach & Loma Linda


 VAMC San Juan


 VAMC Phoenix


 VAMC Denver


 VAMC Jackson


 VAMC Minneapolis

VCS has joined with General Mills to feature these gold medal winners of the 2007 National Veterans Wheelchair Games on a special edition Cheerios box that will be sold in military markets and the VCS retail stores around the country. In celebration of the event, VCS has partnered with HealthierUS Veterans to challenge VHA staff & our veterans to participate in the "Champions' Challenge". A host of motivational incentives and events are planned throughout the 100-day challenge, including special appearances by the twelve finalists pictured here.

- **Collaborated with the Office of Veterans Health Communications** in two endeavors:

- o Release of the award-winning Get Fit for Life Exercise DVD
- o A customized entry to the President's Challenge website from the HUSV website: <http://healthierusveterans.presidentschallenge.org>



- **Sponsored mini-grants for HUSV projects at VA facilities and Community-Based Outpatient Clinics.** From over 160 applications, 41 mini-grants totaling \$106,000 were awarded. These creative projects, such as stairwell enhancements, establishment of indoor and outdoor walking trails, fitness classes and equipment, healthy cooking demonstrations, and other health education projects, encouraged healthy eating, physical activity, and getting fit for life. Grant recipients reported on their projects on monthly HUSV conference calls. Project summaries will be published in a digest.
- **Attended five Veteran Service Organizations' National Conventions** over the summer, exhibiting for both HUSV

and the MOVE! weight management program and talking to thousands of Veterans and their families about:

- o The benefits of eating healthy, being active, and getting fit for life!
- o Opportunities to participate in a Fit for Life volunteer corps at their local VA facilities.
- Represented the VA as a federal partner in support of the **2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans** that were recently released by HHS. The Guidelines and information about how to promote them in local communities are available at: www.health.gov/paguidelines/

In FY 2009, NCP plans to pursue a broad range of partnerships within and outside VHA to promote healthy lifestyles and obesity/diabetes prevention. Plans include:

- Developing collaboration with the YMCA of the USA.
- Contacting other federal agencies (e.g., CDC, Indian Health Service) about partnerships.
- Developing collaborations with VA Voluntary Services, Veterans Service Organizations, and Veterans Canteen Service.
- Partnering with Veterans Canteen Service in the spring to organize the 2009 Champions' Challenge, which will promote awareness of the new Physical Activity Guidelines. The 2009 event challenges participants to complete 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week for at least 8 out of 12 weeks.



"It's amazing what a small amount of money can do to seed a project...It was beautiful to watch the veterans doing Tai Chi and hear their comments afterward...it felt like a small miracle to watch them in unison and see the smiles on their faces!"

*Sandy Robertson, RN, MSN, PH-CNS, Public Health Clinical Nurse Specialist,
Planetree Program Coordinator, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System*

Health Promotion and Employee Wellness

RICHARD HARVEY, Ph.D., Program Manager, Health Promotion and Employee Wellness

NCP engaged in health promotion efforts for both Veterans and employees in FY08, throughout the VA and VHA, as well as with external partners. Activities included:

- **Two national meetings that offered training to staff** in motivational communication skills, health behavior change techniques, and organizational change strategies, in response to widely-expressed needs from the field. Participants included Prevention Coordinators, Employee Wellness Coordinators, MOVE! Coordinators, HealthierUS Veterans Coordinators, Patient Education Coordinators, Tobacco Cessation Lead Clinicians, and others.
- **A written proposal to the Employee Education Service to establish a uniform national curriculum** and to conduct staff training in motivational communication skills over the next few years. The proposal is a joint product of NCP and other offices in PCS, as well as the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards and the Office of Nursing Services. The proposal has received a favorable review.
- Collaboration with the Office of Occupational Health and Safety and Prevention in the VHA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards in **planning and implementing an employee wellness demonstration project**, now underway in VISN 23. This first attempt at measuring the potential effects of wellness programming in a VA health care employee population is expected to provide outcome data on employee health and productivity.
- **Ongoing work with the Office of Personnel Management** on federal policy related to employee wellness.
- **Promotion and support of 2008 National Employee Health and Fitness Day events** and publication of the *2008 Wellness Digest* that chronicled those events. Every VISN hosted events that included events such as “Walk and Roll” activity and health and wellness information tables and booths. More than 100 employees and/or Veterans participated at many events; in some cases, the facility Director or other leaders led the walk.
- **Support of employee wellness programs in the field** by providing employee wellness resources on the NCP website, through individual and group e-mail contact, and through bi-monthly conference calls. Conference call topics included featured speakers on topics such as corporate employee wellness, establishing farmers’ markets, wellness marketing and communication strategies, yoga programs for employees, bicycling to work, and wellness coaching.
- **Promotion of employee wellness** through multiple presentations to national VHA groups, including the 2008 Carey Awards Symposium, the AFGE National Safety Meeting, the VISN 23 Prevention meeting, and the National Weight Management Conference.
- **Hosting an employee wellness display** at the VHA Senior Management Conference.

In 2009, NCP will continue to work to advance the employee wellness agenda in both VHA and the greater VA organization. NCP will:

- Coordinate activities, if the proposal to EES is approved, for a uniform national curriculum and widespread staff training in motivational communication skills. Enhancing the health behavior change skills of clinical and patient education staff through such training can greatly enhance the effectiveness of efforts to help patients adopt healthier behaviors.
- Continue our participation in planning a national VA employee wellness initiative with the National Quality Council (NQC) and the VA WorkLife and Benefits Service, a section of the VA Office of Human Resources Management. This initiative holds great promise for expanding employee wellness programming throughout the entire VA organization, as well as strengthening existing programs. The NQC is a partnership group composed of representatives from the various federal employee unions and VA leadership. VA Secretary Dr. James B. Peake and American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) President Ms. Alma Lee issued a joint announcement about this new initiative in October 2008.

- Continue to promote *MOVEmployee!* Weight management programs for employees continue to expand in number. Between November 2007 and November 2008, the number of *MOVEmployee!* or similar programs in operation increased from 63 to 69. Based on informal reports, additional facilities are expected to initiate *MOVEmployee!* programs in 2009.

- Promote and support 2008 National Employee Health and Fitness Day.

We hope that national employee wellness initiatives now beginning will lead to weight management services being offered to all employees throughout VA.

Research & Evaluation

LEILA C. KAHWATI, MD, MPH, Deputy Chief Consultant for Preventive Medicine

In FY08, with the creation of the new permanent position of Research and Evaluation Analyst, filled by Trang Lance, MPH, this section was able to make great strides forward in prevention research and evaluation. This major addition to our staff has expanded the evaluation capabilities of NCP. For example, it has allowed us to improve the tools used by field staff to report on HealthierUS Veteran (HUSV)-related events.

In FY08, the Research and Evaluation section:

- Completed the final testing and validation of a new performance measure for obesity screening.
- Received final approval by the VHA Performance Management Workgroup in the Office of Quality and Performance identifying obesity screening as performance measure in FY09. This measure, designated as a Mission Critical measure for all VISNs, is significant in that it provides a strong incentive for facilities to implement robust weight management treatment programs and is evidence of the agency's serious commitment to the treatment of obesity.

- Released the first comprehensive national evaluation of *MOVE!* program. These findings are based on *MOVE!* annual report data provided by facilities and VHA utilization data.
- Conducted a special evaluation of the clinical effectiveness of the *MOVE!* program.
- Awarded a contract for the next phase of *MOVE!* evaluation to assist us in identifying program structure and processes associated with better clinical patient outcomes.
- Continued to serve as consultants and/or collaborators on obesity-related research. The organizational component of the multi-center *MOVE*VETS* trial is currently underway, with plans to start the patient component soon.

We eagerly anticipate several key activities in FY09.

- Starting the next phase of *MOVE!* evaluation. This will allow us to answer the questions of "Why *MOVE!* is more effective in some facilities" and "what factors lead to more or less effectiveness."
- Doing preliminary work on development of a patient-level composite prevention performance indicator.

Veterans Health Education and Information (VHEI)

ROSE MARY PRIES, DrPH, Program Manager

VHEI, in only its second year, contributes to patient-centered care; supports the field in achieving enhanced clinical outcomes and meeting The Joint Commission standards; and addresses the patient satisfaction, patient safety, and health literacy needs of Veterans.

In FY08, the following activities highlight VHEI's focus on the needs of Veterans and family members, the clinicians who provide health education services, and the systems needed to support these efforts:

- Added a new staff position in VHEI, due to increased requests for VHEI services from the field and other program offices. Our new Health Education Coordinator, Barbara Snyder, MPH, brings years of experience in health education.
- Collaborated with key VACO program offices and experts from the field in the development of NCP's first handbooks on health education:
 - The **Veterans Health Education and Information Core Program Requirements Handbook** will guide the field in establishing the critical organizational elements needed to support health education at the VISN, VAMC program, and patient-clinician levels.
 - The **Patient Health Education Procedures for Accreditation by The Joint Commission** will assist facilities in meeting The Joint Commission patient education standards and requirements.
- Provided support to the field through a series of four Employee Education System satellite broadcasts and a system-wide teleconference program on accreditation processes related to patient education. These broadcasts were extremely well-attended.
- Provided support to the field-based **Patient Education Network** through consultation and technical assistance on health education, orientation of new Patient Education Coordinators, mentoring opportunities, monthly hotlines, quarterly conference calls, and the production and distribution of the quarterly newsletter, *Patient Education in Primary Care*.
- Developed a partnership with the **Health Literacy Program** in the Harvard University School of Public Health in a complex Health Literacy Project. The Health Literacy Project in 2008 focused on environmental health literacy. Facility environments that are welcoming, friendly and easy for Veterans to navigate are one of three components of health literacy. VHEI field-tested a process and instrument for facilities to assess their environmental health literacy. We hoped for 10 volunteer sites in the field-test—instead, 56 facilities volunteered! A presentation on the field test at the VA Primary Care Conference generated much interest in the use of the environmental health literacy tool.
- Developed plans for a system-wide **New Patient Orientation Program** to help new VHA enrollees receive the information they need for optimal access and use of healthcare services.
- Provided revisions and updates in the design, learning activities, instructional materials, facilitator instructions, and participant handouts for the highly successful **Patient Education: TEACH for Success** program. TEACH promotes patient-centered care by enhancing VHA clinicians' counseling and communication skills. In collaboration with EES, VHEI also sponsored a TEACH train-the-facilitator conference.
- Collaborated with the **VHA Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Education Committee and a Congressional Panel** on Education for TBI Caregivers to provide the highest quality care to OEF/OIF Veterans, especially those with TBI.

- Led the **Patient Education Subgroup of My HealtheVet** which created new Healthy Living Centers and assisted developing content formats for secure messaging.
- Participated in the development of the **Separation from Active Duty Healthy Living Center on My HealtheVet**, and health education resources for Post-Deployment Care Clinics.
- Consulted with VACO clinical program offices to develop educational materials to meet the specific needs of Veterans, including:
 - Dual Care Letter—Office of Primary Care
 - Family Member Rights and Responsibilities—Office of Ethics in Health Care
 - Publication & Dissemination Standards—Office of Communications
- Finalizing the New Patient Orientation Program.
- Completing the two additional components of the Health Literacy project
 - Guidelines to help clinicians select or develop print materials for patients with limited health literacy.
 - Web-based learning program for clinicians to enhance their communication skills with patients or family members with limited health literacy.
- Developing a more formal process to orient new Patient Education Coordinators.
- Addressing the 2009 changes in The Joint Commission Standards.
- Refining the VHEI website.
- Developing more system-supports across all levels of VHA to promote health education.

Plans for FY09 include:

- Continuing support and technical assistance to the Patient Education Network.

“It was such a rewarding moment for me as a TEACH facilitator when a long-time clinician came back after the first day of class and said, ‘I tried that technique you taught us and it really worked well.’”



MOVE!

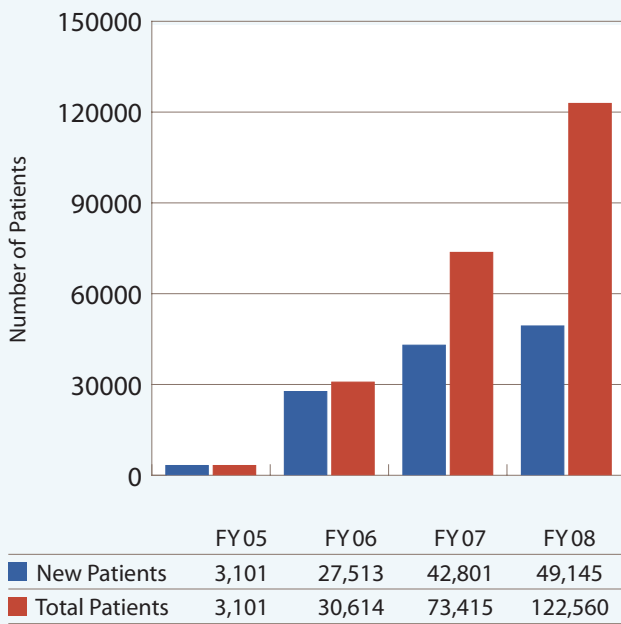
KENNETH R. JONES, Ph.D, National Program Director for Weight Management/MOVE!

FY08 saw continued expansion of the MOVE! Weight Management Program for Veterans (MOVE!). Program monitoring showed the following:

- Office of Quality and Performance supporting indicator data showed that an national average of 65% of patients had their height and weight assessed and for those patients identified to be at weight-related risk, offered participation in MOVE!. For FY 2009, the supporting indicator becomes a performance measure, with a 65% target rate of screening for all facilities.
- The number of patients receiving MOVE! care continued to increase. A total of 64,082 patients—48,415 of them newly referred—received MOVE! care in over 600,000 visits.

New and Cumulative MOVE! Patients per Fiscal Year

The number of new patients continues to increase each year as facilities have built treatment capacity.



The MOVE! team partnered with many different groups in FY08 to improve the health of Veterans. The MOVE! team:

- Collaborated with VHA and the Federal Office of Management and Budget, which resulted in the Secretary modifying the Code of Federal Regulations to exempt MOVE! care from co-payment. Co-payments for MOVE! care, required for patients in certain eligibility groups, were a major barrier to participation.
- Partnered with the HealthierUS Veterans Initiative and Veterans Canteen Service, to co-sponsor the 100-mile Champions' Challenge to promote increased physical activity. More than 35,000 Veterans, staff members, and others participated in the program.
- Shared with the Department of Defense (DoD) MOVE! software, program materials, and treatment algorithms, which were used to initiate the US Army MOVE! program creating a program of care on the Army Knowledge Online web-based system for staff working on weight management.
- Supported the DoD Surgeon General's official endorsement of MOVE! for use in meeting joint VA-DoD clinical practice guidelines for the evaluation and treatment of obesity in DoD medical treatment facilities.
- Supported the Veterans Canteen Stores' plan to introduce a national program to support MOVE!, offering healthy "MOVE!-approved" snacks, exercise equipment, and exercise apparel displays in their stores.
- Collaborated with the Durham VAMC to produce guidance for facilities wishing to initiate intensive programs of care for patients who have not benefited from self-management support and may not benefit from either weight loss medications or bariatric surgery.



Tools used in the MOVE! Program at the Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System

The significance and growth of the MOVE! Weight Management Program in VHA was also reflected in positive changes in staff positions at NCP in FY08.

- A new NCP position, National Program Director for Weight Management, was created to direct VHA's weight management efforts.
- Two positions, dietitian program coordinator and physical activity program coordinator, were added as part of our permanent staff. Lynn Novorska and Sophia Hurley, respectively, bring with them hands-on experience gained in the MOVE! Program at VAMCs.

In FY09, MOVE! will:

- Offer two conferences to update Facility MOVE! Coordinators, Physician Champions, and general MOVE! team members on MOVE! developments and enable VISN-specific strategic planning.
- Make weight management content available on Office of Care Coordination home messaging devices for selected patients.
- Pilot a program called Telephone Lifestyle Coaching (MOVE! TLC) in VISN 2. If successful, we will release guidance on how to launch MOVE! TLC at other facilities/VISNs.



"I can't tell you how many patients are thrilled with the copayment waiver. It was a significant barrier for many patients."

—Comment from MOVE! Annual Report 2008



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